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SKILLS-BASED ECLECTIC TECHNIQUES MATRIX FOR ELT MICROTEACHINGS

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Abstract

Foreign language teaching undergoes constant changes due to the methodological improvement. This progress may be examined in two parts. They are the methods era and the post-methods era. It is not pragmatic today to propose a particular language teaching method and its techniques for all purposes. The holistic inflexibility of mid-century methods has long gone. In the present day, constructivist foreign language teaching trends attempt to see the learner as a whole person and an individual who may be different from the other students in many respects. At the same time, the individual differences should not keep the learners away from group harmony. For this reason, current teacher training programs require eclectic teaching matrixes for unit design considering the mixed ability student groups. These matrixes can be prepared in a multidimensional fashion because there are many functional techniques in different methods and other new techniques to be created by instructors freely in accordance with the teaching aims. The hypothesis in this argument is that the collection of foreign language teaching techniques compiled in ELT microteachings for a particular group of learners has to be arranged eclectically in order to update the teaching process. Nevertheless, designing a teaching format of this sort is a demanding and highly criticized task. This study briefly argues eclecticism in language-skills based methodological struggle from the perspective of ELT teacher education.

Keywords: FLT, ELT, teacher training, ELT microteachings, eclectic matrix

1. Introduction

ELT methodology and learners meet in techniques (Sarigöz 2012). The learners in a foreign language classroom do not have much methodological knowledge about FLT methodology. They are only exposed to the techniques applied during the lessons. The learners do not need to understand the instructional technology accumulated in the field of ELT. Techniques constitute the only meeting zone with all the teaching tools employed by the instructor and ELT methodology. In this vein, unit planning and the quality of the collection of techniques in a unit is extremely critical in teacher training. A unit is the smallest macro ELT realm or the most complete smallest structure technically affected by approaches and methods. Whether eclecticism is popular and practiced widely in microteachings is out of the scope of this discussion.

2. Problem

Detailed and systematic microteaching applications are standard in some ELT departments. Many teacher trainees who attend ELT methodology courses prepare microteaching outlines prior to the presentations. The symbiotic relationship between mid-century methods and their techniques plays an important role in microteaching design as well as the newly emerged techniques which belong to no popular method. In this study the author who has been in teacher training field for thirty-three years points out that experiencing chaos in microteaching design and presentation is possible. There are many factors causing

problems which affect skills-based presentations. This argument looks into this matter from the standpoint of structure of eclectic planning.

3. Integrated Instruction, Eclecticism, and Microteachings

Richards and Rodgers (1986) argue that an approach can lead to a method if an instructional system is designed. The essential factors for such a design include objectives, the syllabus, learning tasks and activities, and the roles of learners, teachers, and teaching materials. Brown (2001) argues the priority of integration of four main skills to the teaching through a single skill. Integrated instruction lets learners diversify their efforts into more meaningful tasks. Brown points at the intermingling of the terms “technique, task, procedure, activity, and exercise” which are frequently used in free variation. He defines the term “technique” as any of the practices above used in instruction for realizing the objectives of a lesson. Wallace (1991) defines microteachings as the sessions which involve delivering brief lessons exemplifying certain skills. Trainees receive criticism from peers or supervisors. On the other hand, microteachings provide collective and secure experimentation in the gradual progress of professional expertise. Richards and Rodgers (2001) indicate that teacher trainees should practice approaches and methods flexibly and innovatively based on personal judgment and experience. They should exercise how to transform and adapt the methods they employ to make their own. As the teacher gains experience, individual approach or method of teaching reflecting personal experiences will be set up. This can be utilized by adapting and modifying the approaches and methods considering the realities of the target student group. According to Cook’s (2003) review, post modern applied linguistics reverses the process and it no longer flows from the academic linguistics through applied linguistics to teachers, but the opposite way. Ghanaguru, Nair, and Yong (2013) discuss that teacher trainees focus on good lesson planning and its implementation. However, It is necessary to generate consciousness of which features of theories and approaches are employed throughout microteaching. He and Yan (2011) argue that artificiality is an important flaw when microteaching experiences are concerned. They suggest that they should be supported with various alternative forms of school experiences and practices. Sarigöz (2015) argues the need for eclectic microteaching design for teaching skills-based units which are generally the final trainee practices in methodology courses after single-skill microteachings.

4. Methods Era

In the linear thinking fashion of the modernist era “blind adherence to one method” was mostly considered as the only way of systematic teaching. The symbiotic relationship of approaches and methods produced collections of teaching techniques based on a specific perception and submission of foreign language instruction. Some of the methods were designer methods compiled by one theorist. Freeman and Anderson (2013) argue that the teachers should not only be aware of contemporary practices in language teaching but also of the history of the discipline.

In the single method genre, the techniques were designed in a working order that complied with the method and there was no or not much ground for “mixed” or independent and “out of the method” techniques. Theoretically, their unit frames were not much open to adaptations. Still there are schools which employ a single foreign language teaching method. Single method adherence may be criticized due to the possible dogmatic limitedness of a single style. On the other hand, undervaluation of existing methods is another point of discussion. Many of the techniques appeared in these collections are eclectically unavoidable teaching tools today.

5. Post-methods Era

Due to the restrictions caused by the natural and limited boundaries of the FLT trends in the methods era, new explorations for innovative methodological combinations have emerged. Today, in many teaching settings the freedom to customize the teaching methodology is inevitably experienced. Naturally, creating a tailored approach to TEFL must be an informed task upon a detailed preparation and needs analysis. Designing eclectic teaching combinations for each unique teaching environment require more resources and energy than using traditional programs and standard teaching packs. Bell (2007) argues that methods are still alive and it seems that instructors are aware of both the value of methods and the need to go ahead of them.

Eclectic approach, which is a post methods era trend, is also a highly criticized teaching technology as well as the single method since clear guidelines for the best methodological combination do not exist. Furthermore, its training does not exist as an independent course in methodology programs of teacher education colleges. In this vein, the informed eclecticism is a complicated matter in terms of its training, rehearsals, and evaluation. In short, how this phenomenon is reflected in methodology courses of teacher training programs and how it is reproduced in actual teaching are points that should attract technical attention. For these reasons, teaching the eclectic unit design which is formulated as “integrated-skills based eclectic unit matrix for microteaching applications” in this argument should be experimented as one of the basic training domains. It should not be a rarely discussed or a no-time-left topic in the methodology courses of ELT departments.

6. Method

The single skill based and the integrated-skills based matrixes are constructed for microteachings by the teacher trainees in methodology courses. The former may symbolize a lesson and the latter a unit when the factors such as aims, contents and the duration are considered. These zipped lesson or unit plans are prepared by the trainees by producing all the teaching materials personally. Today, it is not logical to design them within the limits of a single ELT method when the wide range of techniques offered eclectically and created freely are taken into account. Single skill eclectic microteaching practice must be exercised before the “integrated skills” one in methodology courses. The latter is the final one that represents a unit and contains many parts the former contains. That is, trainees should start teaching main language skills and sub-skills singly first. Depending on the class time available, a single skill microteaching such as “reading” may take twenty minutes whereas a skills based microteaching may take forty-five minutes. A skills-based eclectic microteaching may include all language skills and sub-skills depending on the time available. As argued elsewhere, it is the smallest macro teaching design affected by the ELT acculturation.

As the basic method for the discussed application, the parts below argue and illustrate a model template that may represent the components of an integrated, eclectic, and skills-based ELT microteaching. The suggested style of construction can be used for simulating how to compile and teach a general English teaching unit that may appear in a school syllabus for TEFL. The matrix in Table-1 below has five interchangeable domains that can be flexibly programmed according to the learner needs and the resources available.

6.1. Discussion: Matrix for The Eclectic Foreign Language Teaching Unit: A Skills-Based Perspective

Due to the instructional flexibility that exists in eclectic approach, learner needs and expectations and the resources must definitely be considered in unit design. Eclectic approach

rationally fosters the innovative domain in unit design and its teaching considering the target teaching environment. Trainees should start with analyzing:

who the learners are.

what the teaching approach is.

the limits of interlanguage.

the course materials and the technical resources it offers.

Designing an eclectic unit matrix or modifying the given unit in this fashion is a truly constructivist process. There is some improvisation but there is definitely research and planning. To consider the philosophy behind each method is a prerequisite before the compilation of the collection of techniques from each method. Techniques liberate the energy for the implementation of the task. An eclectic microteaching configuration is a collection of well working techniques from the popular methods and “freelance” techniques. The author defines the freelance techniques as the self employed ones, not utilized by a particular method.

6.2. The Mixing Process

Designing a skills-based eclectic matrix is a professional assembly and ordering process which reflects the higher order methodological concerns accumulated in FLT. The set up in Table-1 is a skills-based eclectic techniques-matrix constructed by the author for teaching a unit. The mixing of the contents should be arranged according to the variables of the teaching arrangement which basically cover the learners, the instructor, the teaching materials, the methodology employed, and the teaching goals. The techniques in the matrix that come from a method are listed in the methods reviewed by Freeman (1986).

Table 1 .*The skills-based eclectic matrix*

	Activity	Technique	Method	Aim	Time
1	Positive classroom environment	Classroom set-up	Suggestopedia/ Brain Based Learning	Removing barriers to learning	
2	A well mediated opening	The warm-up	Freelance	Smooth start	
3	A short class dialogue on the subject	Positive Suggestion	Suggestopedia	Narrowing down Brainstorming	
4	Focusing on the pictures on the class wall and guessing	Peripheral teaching	Suggestopedia	Contextualization	
5	Using real-life language materials	Authentic Materials	Communicative Language Teaching	Making communication real-like	
6	Read the text and answer the Comprehension Questions	Information, inference, own experience questions	The Grammar Translation Method	Reading, thinking, writing, and speaking	

7	Match the words and pictures	Vocabulary comprehension check	Freelance	Understanding lexicon	
8	Ask and answer questions - Teacher ask questions, there is a particular grammar, and students answer, later they ask to each other	Inference - Conversation Practice	The Direct Method	Grammar in context Pair work or group work	
9	Listen to the details, solve the puzzle and rewrite the short play accordingly	Listening skills	Freelance	Listening practice	
10	Presenting the grammar with examples, upon comprehension students apply it to other examples	Deductive Application	The Grammar Translation Method	Grammar practice	
11	Write in the blanks the missing vocabulary or grammar items	Fill-in-the-blanks-exercise	The Grammar Translation Method	Vocabulary check	
12	Find out if your answer or the supplied alternative answer is correct	Getting students to self correct	The Direct Method	Self correction and learning	
13	Play the grammar game - There is a limited context	Grammar game	The Audio Lingual Method	Grammar practice through game	
14	Teacher provides help and becomes silent	Teacher's Silence	The silent way	Learner centered instruction	
15	Exchange information and complete the given task	Opinion-gap Task	Task Based Language Teaching	Guessing and speaking	
16	Pretend and act	Role play	Suggestopedia, Communicative Language Teaching	Social event	
17	Sing a theme song	Creative adaptation	Suggestopedia	Practice with rhythm and music	

18	Write a composition	Composition/ Paragraph Writing	Grammar Translation Method / The Direct Method)	Practice through writing	
19	Drama	Real-like Social Event	Freelance	Social event	

The matrix template argued in this study and illustrated in Table-1 has been designed by the author as a base for the ELT microteachings carried out by teacher trainees. The author lets teacher trainees use a broader range of columns (see Table-2) in both the single skill based and the integrated-skills based matrixes. These zipped lesson or unit plans are prepared by the trainees by producing all the content materials and teaching aids by themselves and they are presented by each teacher trainee in the given time period. The number of the techniques listed in the matrix may be determined by the presentation time available. The trainees are free to develop and use new techniques. They are not obliged to use popular techniques.

Table-2 Possible domains for the single skill-based and skills-based eclectic matrix for microteachings

Skill	Activity	Technique	Method	Aim	Instructions	Student Response Type	Communicati on	Materials	Time
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In addition to the main components of the eclectic matrix such as activity, technique, method, and aim, the trainees can specify briefly the instructions and materials besides the type of communication and learner response (Table-2). The model eclectic matrix suggested in Table-1 organizes 19 activities into a microteaching unit. The techniques listed from popular ELT methods and freelance techniques can be brought together depending on the target interlanguage, age level, learners' needs, unit goals and other critical variables. The timing column in Table-1 has no time distribution. Time zones can be assigned depending on the timetable of the microteaching application. The author lets trainees use various combinations such as the one in Table-1 for different types of microteachings and student age groups including young learners.

6.3. Problem Foreseeing

Designing an eclectic integrated- skills-based unit plan in training is the first step for trainees in macro teaching design. After the single-skill microteachings they are ready to see the bigger picture; "the unit" which is a miniature of the syllabus. The simple pre-while-post route used for single-skill microteachings cannot be used anymore. The trainees have to technically simplify all the components that should be integrated in a unit which is normally taught in one week in real schooling. Trainees should attempt to create the most dynamics of teaching such as an effective warm up and contextualization, procedural ordering of techniques, seamless transitions, and classroom management. The placement of grammar component is vital and many of the problems may occur in case of disordering. Timing of the skills during presentation is another concern. Rehearsals before the microteaching may

solve problems of this sort since this is a multi-skills simulation. Zones for speaking skill should be granted by including pair-work and group work. Responses only in chorus or weak individual answers should not be considered as speaking. Weak spots in microteachings are normal since these are the first serious teaching sessions. Teacher trainees mostly present very well prepared microteachings and benefit from feedback.

7. Conclusion

Microteaching planning by ELT teacher trainees before the presentation stage may be a chaotic process. It is absolutely a multidimensional procedure. The trainee prepares a collection of teaching techniques which serve the teaching of a language point within a context. Some techniques may come from the ELT methods and some from the post methods zone. The trainee can eclectically combine them and test it in front of the trainee group. The collection of domains in Table-1 and Table-2 attempts to suggest possible templates which will regulate the inclusion of the ultimate dimensions that may be utilized by eclectic microteaching design. The matrixes of this sort are early experiences of eclectic foreign language teaching design. As pointed out above, the domains utilized in the matrix may help trainees intensify on each and every detail virtually. Microteachings with such complicated matrixes are essential practices since eclecticism, despite the skepticism, is now an inevitable perspective in FLT particularly when approached from the teacher training perspective.

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